

Attitudes Towards LGBTIQ+ Visibility: A Qualitative Analysis of Facebook Comments in Chilean Press

Actitudes Frente a la Visibilidad LGBTIQ+: Análisis Cualitativo de Comentarios de Prensa Chilena en Facebook

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The objective of this research was to describe the attitudes to LGBTIQ+ visibility presented in the comment section to news written by the Chilean press and published on Facebook pages between the years 2019 and 2020. The concepts of visibility and attitudes are addressed in the frame of reference, specifically, prejudice, discrimination, and stigma. The role of social media services (SM) in LGBTIQ+ visibility is explained. Employing a qualitative methodology and the main techniques of empirical grounded theory, the data obtained from the natural observation of comments on Facebook posts that met the eligibility criteria was progressively analyzed. The corpus was made up of 2879 comments extracted from 8 pieces of news. An analysis of inductive content was carried out by using open coding and coaxial coding. The verbal and graphic content of the comments was systematized in categories that organize gradually the comments from more positive attitudes to more negative ones. The positive attitudes champion the importance of LGBTIQ+ visibility, the right to comprehensive healthcare, the right to equality, and respect. The negative attitudes are mainly related to moral principles related to religion, family and/or cisheteronormativity, and, in the most extreme cases, they validate hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ people. Understanding the attitudes towards the visibility of LGBTIQ+ people would be an important component for the design of educational strategies on sexual and gender diversity in social media services (SM).

Keywords: LGBTIQ+ visibility, press, attitudes

El objetivo de la investigación fue describir las actitudes hacia la visibilidad LGBTIQ+, presentes en comentarios a noticias de prensa chilena publicadas en Facebook entre los años 2019 y 2020. En el marco referencial se abordan los conceptos de visibilidad y actitudes, específicamente, prejuicio, discriminación y estigma. Se explica el rol de los servicios de redes sociales (RRSS) para la visibilidad LGBTIQ+. Mediante una metodología cualitativa y las principales técnicas de la teoría fundamentada empíricamente, se analizaron de manera progresiva los datos obtenidos de la observación natural de comentarios de publicaciones de Facebook que cumplieron con los criterios de elegibilidad. El corpus quedó constituido por 2879 comentarios extraídos de 8 noticias. Se realizó un análisis de contenido inductivo, utilizando codificación abierta y codificación axial. El contenido verbal y gráfico de los comentarios fue sistematizado en categorías que organizan de manera gradual los comentarios desde las actitudes más positivas a las más negativas. Las actitudes positivas abogan por la importancia de la visibilidad LGBTIQ+, el derecho a una salud integral para todas las personas, el derecho a la igualdad y el respeto. Las actitudes negativas se relacionan principalmente con principios morales de la religión, la familia y/o la cisheteronorma y, en casos más extremos, validan el discurso de odio hacia personas LGBTIQ+. Comprender las actitudes frente a la visibilidad de personas LGBTIQ+ sería un componente importante para el diseño de estrategias educativas sobre diversidad sexual y de género en servicios de RRSS.

Palabras clave: visibilidad LGBTIQ+, prensa, actitudes

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The desire to ensure sexual rights for all people involves contemplating an integral perspective of sexuality, considering the physical, mental and social components. In this sense, promoting that people who identify themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, among others -from now on LGBTIQ+ people- can live a pleasurable sexuality free from all types of violence and discrimination is a priority issue according to the World Health Organization (2018).

The constant need to demand access to and respect for human rights denied at the structural level, such as, for example, the recent access to equal marriage and homoparental adoption, school inclusion, among others, as well as repeated cases and complaints of discrimination directed towards members of the LGBTIQ+ community (Gómez Roa & Castañeda, 2021; Gómez Roa et al, 2022), are antecedents that show that LGBTIQ+ people are still victims of negative attitudes based on stigma and prejudice, the understanding and modification of which is fundamental to promote comprehensive sexual health for all people (Verkuyten et al., 2020).

The LGBTIQ+ population, for its part, carries out different demonstrations with the aim of making visible and claiming the diversity of sexual practices, orientations and identities and, with this, demanding access to a system of equal rights (Matsick et al., 2020).

Currently, a frequent way of making this visible is for public figures to announce or acknowledge in the media that they belong to the LGBTIQ+ population. This news is often published in national digital media and disseminated on social networking services (social networking sites), such as Facebook. These publications evoke a large number of comments expressing different attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people being visible. In this context, this research aimed to describe the attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ visibility present in comments to Chilean press news published on Facebook between 2019 and 2020.

LGBTIQ+ visibility

Ross (2008) indicates that talking about visibility in the LGBTIQ+ context is associated with the often used metaphor of "coming out", understanding that it is a process of bringing to light or making evident an identity or orientation that is usually hidden for fear of reprisals, for violating social norms and that, therefore, now demands social validation and recognition. According to Cass (1979), "coming out" is one of the last stages in the process of assuming a sexual orientation and/or gender identity that escapes the cisheteronormative discourse and, therefore, requires an enormous individual effort to negotiate and reintegrate at a personal and social level personal characteristics that go against social norms and expectations in matters of sexuality. According to Pérez Sancho (2005) in his model of the construction of sexual orientation, the penultimate stage, called the acceptance stage, implies a certain degree of participation in instances that seek to make diverse sexualities visible and normalise them, and is therefore an act that demands social change.

Different research shows that visibility is necessary at the individual level, since, according to Ross (2008), a positive representation of LGBTIQ+ people has a favourable impact on the identity construction processes of other LGBTIQ+ people. Dávila et al. (2021), in their studies on the visibility of bisexual people, conclude that visibility has an important educational purpose, as this process can facilitate acceptance by decreasing social stigma.

Contact with LGBTIQ+ people or references, for example in the media, would allow for greater acceptance and appreciation of differences (Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021) and this has a significant impact on young people and adolescents suffering from LGBTphobia (Francisco Amat et al., 2022). Even considering the benefits of visibility, the literature has shown that LGBTIQ+ people, like other minority groups, must learn to manage the level of visibility of their identities on social media services for fear of discrimination and prejudice (Chester et al., 2016; Rubin & McClelland, 2015).

Social Cognition, Attitudes and Language

From the field of social cognition, there has been an ongoing interest in understanding the ways in which people conceive of themselves in relation to other social groups and how these conceptualisations can mediate and determine the quality of interactions between groups. Thus, from the socio-cognitive approach to attitudes, social and cultural aspects have been established that allow us to understand the stereotypes and attitudes that underlie negative discrimination, prejudice and violence directed towards stigmatised groups.

Socio-cognitive theory argues that attitudes originate from exposure to social stimuli and that the response to these stimuli depends, for example, on the mediation between social norms and reference group values (Greenwood, 2019). In other words, attitudes can be understood as a socio-cultural phenomenon and are therefore constructed, reproduced and maintained on the basis of social interactions.

According to the above, social interactions in digital contexts constitute a propitious scenario for capturing discourses with respect to other groups. Wang (2020) considers that the use of language in these contexts plays an important role in current social interactions and, therefore, plays a leading role in the construction of our reality.

In this sense, the comments posted in the digital press allow us to observe attitudes, based on the interpretative analysis of the opinions, beliefs and emotional manifestations expressed in the verbal and non-verbal resources used in the comments. This also has the benefit of allowing observation in the natural context in which the comments are issued and, thus, reducing the bias of social desirability, understood as a difference between real attitudes and those declared in the context of research based on questionnaire applications, for example (Krumpal, 2013).

Social Media Use and LGBTIQ+ People

According to the Digital 2021: Global Review Report (Kemp, 2021), in Chile there are 16 million active users of social media services, making it the country with the highest number of users in Latin America; within these, Facebook is the most popular, with 13 million active accounts. Incidental news consumption, i.e. news that is available to a profile without a search, has increased significantly in recent years (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2020) and, according to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report (Newman et al., 2020), in Chile, for the first time, news consumption through social media services has surpassed its consumption on television.

Social media, such as Facebook, are widely used by LGBTIQ+ people because they provide the possibility to expand networks and meet people with whom they share similar experiences. They also provide an important support network for LGBTIQ+ adolescents, but there is also a high exposure to discrimination and homo and transphobic expressions (Berger et al., 2021). Thus, LGBTIQ+ people who use social media services, such as Facebook, are not only incidentally exposed to Chilean news, but also to the comments and opinions expressed therein.

Interactions on social media services can also polarise and deepen prejudices due to the selective exposure generated by the use of these services, as interacting only with similar people increases social distance from groups considered to be minorities (Davidson & Farquhar, 2020).

On the other hand, the use of the Internet facilitates homophobic hate speech, validated by its adherents as a sign of freedom of expression (da Silva & da Silva, 2021). However, considering that hate speech restricts and violates the rights of LGBTIQ+ people, it is clear that there must be a way to regulate and prohibit these intimidating practices (Cazellato & Cardin, 2017). The evidence on the effects of prejudice, discrimination and violence on the physical and mental integrity, quality of life and subjective well-being of LGBTIQ+ people is compelling. It has been documented, for example, that LGBTIQ+ people may have a higher prevalence of social isolation, anxiety, depression, eating disorders, substance abuse, suicide attempts and exposure to violence, among others (Aparicio-García et al., 2022; Saraff et al., 2022). Findings are similar in the Chilean context (Barrientos et al., 2019; González Araya et al. 2020; Guzmán-González et al., 2020; Ortega Quezada et al., 2022). Cultural context is directly related to minorities' perception of stress and, with it, on mental health (Miller et al., 2023).

González Araya (2020) argues that discrimination and different forms of violence have severe effects on mental health, not only because of the post-traumatic stress caused by being a victim of aggression, but also because of the self-blame generated by internalising prejudice, causing a decrease in self-esteem and a negative self-image. In this regard, the minority stress model (Meyer, 2003) suggests that LGBTIQ+ people are exposed to a high level of chronic stress as a result of the explicit or anticipated experience of situations of violence or the internalisation of sexual prejudice (Drabish & Theeke, 2022). Thus, attitudes directed at LGBTIQ+ people may contribute to minority stress (Miller et al., 2023). It is relevant to consider that anticipatory or feared discrimination may have the same effects on the health of LGBTIQ+ people as perceived discrimination (Ortega Quezada et al., 2022).

Given that in order to create interaction and express their opinions on the news, users of the Facebook platform have the possibility to post comments that may include verbal messages, reactions, emojis and GIFs, this research considered that the analysis of the content broadcast is an appropriate tool to understand the attitudes of those who comment on news about topics related to LGBTIQ+ people.

Attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ People: Prejudice, Discrimination and Stigma

There is a large body of literature on the violence, discrimination and prejudice suffered regularly and systematically by LGBTIQ+ people around the world. According to the Global Acceptance Index, which aims to measure the relative level of acceptance of LGBTI people in different countries over a specific period of time, Chile is ranked 29th with an estimated 6.83, on a scale of 0 to 10, between 2017 and 2020 (Flores, 2021). In addition, the *XX Annual Report on Human Rights and Gender Diversity in Chile: Facts 2021* (Gómez Roa et al., 2022) systematises the different complaints or cases of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people in Chile. This report indicates that, although the total number of cases and complaints of discrimination against LGBTIQ+ people decreased by 12% compared to 2020, episodes of discrimination in national media and/or social media increased by 4.5%. According to the document, this figure may be on the rise, given the massification of the use of internet services. The report notes that the main forms of discrimination are expressed in insults (49.1%), shouting or harassment (35%), being forced to change appearance (26.2%), disrespect for gender identity (18.4%), among others. In addition, the same report reports the results of the first state study on the LGBTIQ+ reality in Chile, which indicates that 41.2% of the reported forms of discrimination occurred on social media.

Herek (2000) called sexual prejudice hostile attitudes and negative positioning directed towards homosexual people, but nowadays it is applied to the whole LGBTIQ+ population. According to the author, such attitudes can be manifested as beliefs, ideologies and emotions. Emotions, such as aversion, contempt, hatred, distrust, fear and discomfort are some examples of negative attitudes (da Silva & Aléssio, 2019).

Herek (2007) mentions the devalued nature of homosexuality as an example of prejudice and sexual stigma that may even be internalised by LGBTIQ+ people themselves. This type of prejudice seems to be linked to types of morality. On this, Monroe and Plant (2019), in research based on moral foundations theory, have found that the moral principle of purity allows explaining the dehumanisation of LGBTIQ+ people, validating the expression of prejudice, antipathy and discriminatory acts. According to the authors, denying the purity of the human mind of LGBTIQ+ people legitimises the willingness to harm and deny rights.

Linked to the above, da Silva and Aléssio (2019), in their study "Redes de ódio: a homofobia no Facebook", have found that, in hate speech, homosexuality is often socially represented as something unnatural, associated with promiscuity and disease, so it is necessary to fight against this group, in order to preserve traditional family values, morals and good customs.

While LGBTIQ+ population refers to groups based on sexual orientation and gender identity as a whole, research shows that attitudes towards groups differentiated by sexual orientation tend to be more favourable than attitudes towards groups established by gender identity; for example, attitudes towards transgender people show lower levels of acceptance than gay or lesbian people (Davidson & Farquhar, 2020; Lewis et al. 2017).

According to Galaz Valderrama et al. (2018), the situation is similar in Chile, because, although sexual diversity is spoken of as an "umbrella" concept, it is clear that there is a greater marginalisation of trans and intersex people. For example, the *XX Annual Report on Human Rights and Gender Diversity in Chile: Facts 2021* indicates that the perception of discrimination by trans people is higher than the rest of LGBTIQ+ people (Gómez Roa et al., 2022). For Lewis et al. (2017), one of the explanations for this phenomenon has to do with stereotypes and expressions of gender and sexuality and the familiarity with lesbian, gay or bisexual people, compared to trans and intersex people. This background highlights the importance of visibility, with the understanding that interpersonal contact mitigates negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people by increasing knowledge about them, reducing contact anxiety and increasing empathy (Herek, 2002, cited in Lewis et al., 2017).

Method

Design

From an interpretative research paradigm, an exploratory descriptive study was conducted in which, using a qualitative methodology and the main techniques of empirically grounded theory (TFE), a corpus of data composed of news comments on official Facebook pages of different Chilean press media was analysed. The methodological approach of TFE (Strauss & Corbin, 2002) allows us to approach the data without preconceived categories, allowing the categories and their properties to emerge progressively from the analysis of the data, which is consistent with the exploratory and interpretative nature of the research problem.

Corpus

Initially, the Facebook search engine was used to build the corpus, entering the different morphological variations of words such as: homosexuality, gay, LGBT, lesbian, transgender, transsexual, coming out and visibility. In this way, a purposive sampling was used whose selection criteria were: the news item was published during the years 2019 and 2020, the publication was made on the official Facebook page of a Chilean media outlet, the news item contained at least 50 comments and the topic of the news item was about a public figure who recognises an LGBTIQ+ or similar identity. After systematising the initial search and the progressive incorporation of new news items, the final corpus consisted of eight news items and a total of 2,860 comments. The number of news items and comments (see Table 1) that constitute the final corpus respond to a progressive selection according to the indications of theoretical sampling and the principle of theoretical saturation of the categories.

Table 1

Characterisation of the Corpus

News headline	Date	Medium	No. of comments
"When do we come out of the wardrobe?": Malucha Pinto's question to Pablo Ruiz is branded as ill-advised.	14 July 2019	Radio Biobío	1,2 mil
Daniel Arcos, the first Chilean basketball player to admit he is gay	16 June 2020	CNN	296
Pablo Alborán confesses he is gay	17 June 2020	Radio Pudahuel	100
Lorenza Izzo after coming out about her lesbian relationship: "I did it because of the lack of LQTBQ visibility".	2 October 2020	Mega News	50
"International Coming Out Day: 7 Netflix films and series for inspiration	8 October 2020	Radio Biobío	162
"The time has come to say I'm gay": Norwegian referee openly declares his homosexuality	27 October 2020	Radio Biobío	145
The hell he went through as a gay rugby player: "My death was better than people knowing I was gay".	9 November 2020	Radio Biobío	732
Juno" star announces she is transgender	2 December 2020	24 Hours	194

Procedure

The comments for each selected news item were retrieved using ExportComments.com software (<https://exportcomments.com/>) and downloaded into an Excel file. The profile associated with the comment was removed at a stage prior to data analysis as an ethical safeguard. In addition, as the comments are collected by a publicly accessible data source, there are no individualised personal data, so no informed consent was requested and no review of the protocol by a scientific ethics committee was requested. As additional safeguards, links and references to original citations were removed to limit the search for profiles associated with the comments. Ethical recommendations for research using Facebook data in public health were considered (Lathan et al., 2023).

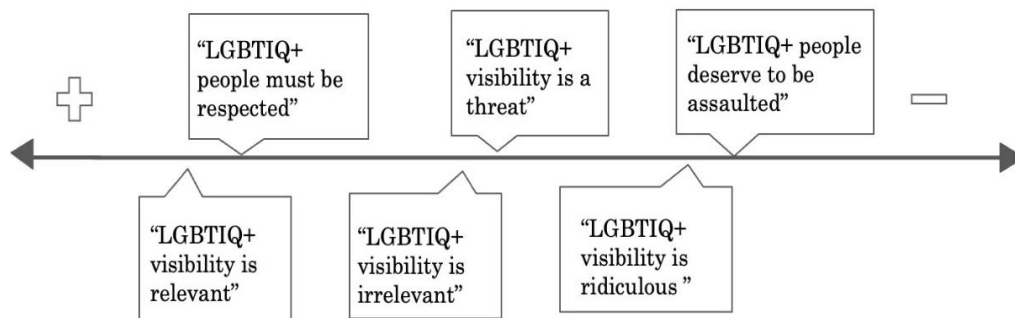
Data Analysis

An inductive content analysis was conducted, initially using open coding by each researcher independently and then axial coding according to peer agreement. The comments were classified according to the attitudes they expressed regarding the expression of LGBTIQ+ identity or visibility; for this purpose, the written and graphic content - mainly emojis and GIFs - present in the comments was considered. The analysis of the data was progressive according to theoretical sampling guidelines: new news items and categories were identified using the constant comparison procedure. The exercise was replicated until a theoretical saturation of the categories was considered to exist.

Results

From the analysis of the data, different attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ visibility were identified. The content, both verbal and graphic, of these comments was systematised into a series of categories that make it possible to configure a dimension that gradually organises (see Figure 1) the comments from the most positive to the most negative attitudes towards the visibility of LGBTIQ+ public figures in the Chilean national press.

Figure 1
Gradient of Attitudes Towards LGBTIQ+ Visibility



At the left end of the gradient we have organised the most favourable or positive attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ visibility, considering those comments that explicitly state that they are in favour of the visibility of LGBTIQ+ people and even highlight its relevance. Then, on the far right of the gradient, we find the categories that express more negative attitudes. Below is a description of each of the categories organised from the most positive to the most negative.

LGBTIQ+ Visibility is Relevant

In this first category, i.e., the one that implies more favourable attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ visibility in the media, we considered those comments that expressed positively about news related to the gender and/or sexual identity of LGBTIQ+ celebrities or public figures. The main argument present in these comments is related to the fact that LGBTIQ+ visibility in the media contributes to facilitating the process of normalisation of non-cis heteronormative sexualities, which would allow for a decrease in violence and associated discrimination. In this sense, those who make this type of comments state that public figures are references, whose experiences can serve as an example for other people who are going through similar situations. The fundamental factor found in this category, which differentiates it from the following categories, is that commentators not only express a favourable stance towards the LGBTIQ+ community, but also advocate for visibility, considering it a necessary resource to build a social conscience that normalises and fosters respect towards LGBTIQ+ people:

This news DOES matter, because representativeness is necessary. If I had had an Elliot Page in my life, it wouldn't have taken me 25 years to realise I was trans. Also, the process would probably have been somewhat easier.

It wouldn't be news if there weren't homophobic people who are capable of ABUSING, HURTING and KILLING those who have a different sexual orientation. It would not be news if being LGBTI+ in this country meant having the same rights as you, such as marriage and adoption. Until equality in dignity and rights does not materialise, banquese [implies bearing] these gestures of pride that deserve recognition in discriminatory spheres such as sport in Chile, visibility is important, yes it should be news.

As for the graphic content present in this category, positive manifestations were reflected in the use of hashtags, flags, symbols or icons popularly representative for the LGBTIQ+ community, such as rainbows and unicorns.

#MEENMARICONA 🏳️🌈



LGBTIQ+ People Must Be Respected

In this category, unlike the previous one, there are comments that do not explicitly state a position in favour of visibility, but it can be observed that the approaches are in favour of LGBTIQ+ people and the search for equal rights. Those issuing these comments raise the need to recognise LGBTIQ+ people on a societal level. At the same time, they defend the human right to individual freedom, highlighting the importance of respecting the full experience and expression of gender and sexuality.

These comments are characterised by the postulation that sexual and gender identity are not aspects by which a person should be judged, as they correspond to characteristics that do not define the actions of every human being. The affirmations present in this classification point, broadly speaking, to the fact that respect should be transversal to all, and it is recognised that there is a certain hostility that makes it difficult for people to LGBTIQ+ people to live their sexuality freely.

For this reason, support is given and the courage to live a sexuality different from the cisheteronorma in an adverse and violent context is highlighted:

I find it brave to acknowledge their sexual orientation, and not to live in the wardrobe for fear of what society will say, they deserve all the respect, not those who mock and live an unhappy life trying to hide their complexes and trancas [problems]!

People are more than how they carry their sexuality. We are children, parents, friends, siblings and the most important thing is to be a good person.

The graphic content used in comments classified within this category is characterised by representing emotions such as liking, caring and support for LGBTIQ+ people, especially through emojis or emoticons of hearts, applause and symbols of strength. In most cases, these emojis, rather than being presented separately, function as reinforcement of a written message:

Bkn amiko 🍀🍀🍀🍀🍀 (🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌



Well 🙌 long live diversity 🍀

LGBTIQ+ Visibility Is Irrelevant

In this third category were grouped those comments whose central premise is that LGBTIQ+ visibility is an irrelevant issue that does not require media exposure. Despite sharing a main premise, different positions emerge from these comments. Three subcategories were identified, ranging from comments expressing a more positive to a more negative attitude towards LGBTIQ+ visibility in the media.

Firstly, there are comments stating that the news presented and therefore the visibility is irrelevant, as LGBTIQ+ people are something normal that should not be discussed in today's society:

A "topic to be discussed" is to be asked in a non-private way, with whom you like to have sex! I mean, I can imagine what their conversations in public would be!!!! I respect everyone regardless of their sexual choice, however, I don't think it is a matter of concern to others, it is a personal issue that does not define who I am as a person.

Secondly, comments were classified as pointing to the existence of more important issues, especially related to the national contingency, which should be reported. For example, the recurrent use of the hashtag #TRIANGULACIONDEPIÑERA refers to a political problem experienced in Chile in the year in which the news was published, related to the country's former president. However, there are cases in which some commentators are in favour of LGBTIQ+ people, but still consider that visibility is not the most relevant thing:

I love it, but there is better news to report.

TVN has repeated this news 100 times is little, what does this help the country? Will the congressmen lower their salaries? Will there be less protests and will the country return to peace and quiet? Stop [bothering] us with so much stupidity.

In the same way, the graphic resources considered as part of this category commonly correspond to posters or attached images that make reference to some milestone relevant to the country:



In third place, considered as the least favourable attitude towards visibility, are those comments that qualify the news as irrelevant, under the argument that the sexual and/or gender identity of LGBTIQ+ people are aspects that do not interest others and therefore should not be mentioned or clarified publicly. A frequently used device to validate this view is to draw an equivalence between homosexual and heterosexual people, pointing out that the latter do not need to mention their sexual orientation to others:

I think because they themselves give them the importance.... If it's like someone above said I don't carry a flag for being straight either.... That should be irrelevant when it comes to being a man or a woman.... Sex life is at home ...

I think so too, how you have to tell everyone that you are gay.... family I gathered them together to tell them that I am heterosexual!!! If you don't do that, why do it in the other condition?

The graphic resources belonging to this category are the most frequent in the corpus and are characterised by being composed of an image accompanied by a message that points to the lack of importance of the news topic and how irrelevant it is for the rest of the people:



As noted above, the reason why these different positions regarding LGBTIQ+ visibility were considered within the same category is that, regardless of the argument, all comments argue that news aimed at reporting on a person's sexual orientation and/or gender identity is unnecessary.

LGBTIQ+ Visibility Is a Threat

The comments grouped in this category are diverse, but are shaped around the idea that visibility and, in repeated cases, that LGBTIQ+ people negatively affect the established social and moral order, considered correct by those issuing the comments.

The first argument under which this particular position is defended is the assumption that LGBTIQ+ visibility violates the integrity of others as it can have a negative influence, especially on children and adolescents, who are in a formative stage of life. According to the logic behind these comments, exposing the reality of LGBTIQ+ people would be promoting a wrong way of living, which threatens morals and traditional values. Furthermore, exposing these particular cases would restrict the freedom of expression of people who are not LGBTIQ+ or who fit within a cisheteronormative system:

Nowadays there is no care in talking about the subject...as the most normal thing, zero respect for those who bother to listen to and watch children who only confuse them... etc. It's no wonder that misguided people bring such impertinence to the table...

The Law cannot endorse that Deviant Adults homosexualise Youth. If they choose such an option, should it not be in full maturity and aware of the drama their lives will lead to? Anyone who does not applaud such deviance and opts for the Natural, is puerile offended by being called "Closet Gay" or is absurdly held responsible for LGBTI Suicides!

Then there are positions that take a negative stance on LGBTIQ+ visibility, based on biological essentialism or religious fundamentalism, arguing, for example, that God only created one man and one woman. These comments sentence a punishment or consequences to be faced if the standards imposed, whether by religion or biology, are not met:

How disgusting in the eyes of God and no example to anyone may God have mercy or if he dies he will burn in the 🔥🔥.

Homosexuals will not enter the kingdom of God.1 Corinthians 6/9.

I don't think you understand, he is biologically female.

Some of the graphic resources identified that allude to such arguments are images that use objects to illustrate and defend a cisheteronormative position:



Note. Text in image: I am with the original design. Marriage as God created it (alludes to the compatibility of sexual organs).

Another argument claims that LGBTIQ+ people are currently given privileges over cisgender and/or heterosexual people, which would be a threat, because this takes away their social responsibility, so that they can do anything without being questioned.

In this sense, it is argued that LGBTIQ+ people are positioned as false victims who try to appeal to compassion, despite being a group that is socially more valued, respected and enjoys an immunity that allows them to disrespect the freedom of those who differ from their opinions or lifestyle:

You are falling victim to propaganda. "Tolerance" simply means acknowledging and respecting the beliefs and practices of others without necessarily agreeing or sympathising with them. However, when many homosexuals use the word "tolerance", they mean something that goes far beyond just respecting their rights; they also demand approval, praise and endorsement of their beliefs, values and lifestyle. What other group in this country could demand that? Their attitude and their demands are not just, not right, not constitutional.

There is a group of untouchables that I am fed up with.



Finally, there are those who consider that the visibility of LGBTIQ+ public figures only corresponds to a publicity strategy or a fad financed by a socially and economically influential group, sometimes referred to as the *gay lobby*, which seeks to impose the ideas and sexuality of LGBTIQ+ people as a new normality, overriding the rights of other people:

There is a lot of money involved in this kind of "news", in its origin, its creation. The lobbies have no scruples... This creates propaganda that the media repeats as a real and moving story. You know the reaction of the masses... 🤖



Note: Text in image: "look at me, look at me, I am special and different, look at me, look at me".

The graphic resources classified in this category allude to the idea of threat based on the use of strategies to seek privileges or special treatment with respect to cissexual people; for example, the role of victim is alluded to, the use of advertising strategies or political campaigns to impose a new social order.

In general terms, it is observed that the comments in this category take on a defensive attitude towards visibility, as it is understood as a threat to the social and moral order already established, in an apparently natural way, and which is configured by the norms that regulate gender and sexuality. In each case, the idea of a new naturalness promoted on a personal level, by each LGBTIQ+ individual, and collectively, by an influential group, is rejected.

LGBTIQ+ Visibility Is Ridiculous

This category groups together comments that adopt an ironic and/or mocking attitude towards visibility. In the verbal language used in these comments, a recurrent recourse is to compare, for example, aspects of a transgender person's transition process with banal objects or situations. It is also common to find comments ironically mentioning the different groups within the LGBTIQ+ community, implying that the range of sexual and gender identities is so wide as to be absurd. Finally, the way in which LGBTIQ+ people express themselves, whether it be through clothing or distinctive symbols, is negatively and broadly referred to:

I am a unicorn, anyone who doesn't come and rub my horn is a transphobic bigot!

I want to change my name to banana!

Is it the same as pride day or is it something else? I don't want to offend anyone, but if you give a day to every part of the lgbt movement? there are going to be missing days in the calendar XD.



Note. Text in image: "sorry, cannot be reproduced".

The graphic resources used to ridicule LGBTIQ+ visibility are mainly based on mocking people representing LGBTIQ+ rights groups. In addition, they caricature LGBTIQ+ visibility using irony, images of naked bodies and even alluding to sexual practices. The images have in common the mockery of the icons and goals of LGBTIQ+ visibility.

LGBTIQ+ People Deserve to be Assaulted

This last category encompasses the comments that express the most negative attitude towards LGBTIQ+ visibility, since, although no explicit opinions are expressed in this regard, the basis of these statements expresses a discourse of hatred towards LGBTIQ+ people and, therefore, their visibility.

Although this section contains comments of various kinds, they all have in common an attack on LGBTIQ+ people, reducing their personal integrity to a perverse, immoral and unnatural sexuality. In addition, recurrent comments can be identified in which mockery and expressions of disgust towards sexual behaviour and practices are made using foul language based on genitality and gender stereotypes:

There you have it, Irrefutable Evidence of Disorder, because the Rectum is a Reservoir of Pathogens and Anatomically made, to Evacuate Faeces and not to Admit Penises, but the Sodomite, in his Delirium, considers it Organ of LOVE ? ❤️ Hence, the terrible Diseases and even use of Diapers !

I am fed up with the mar1c0n3s. 🤢

He likes to be put through the meat ring.

He referees with a dick with veins.

Just dropping by to drop this off... 🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢🤢

Yuck.

As in the verbal content, the graphic resources used in this category are intended to offend or attack LGBTIQ+ people through images that mock gender stereotypes and expressions or by emphasising genitalia, especially in the case of transgender people. In addition, to demonstrate disgust or revulsion, commentators resort to the use of vomit and excrement emojis.



Discussion

From the qualitative analysis of the corpus, it can be identified that there are different attitudes towards the visibility of LGBTIQ+ public figures in the Chilean national press. The analysis of the content present in the comments allowed us to organise and classify the attitudes from the most favourable or positive towards visibility to strictly negative or unfavourable attitudes, following the system for measuring attitudes proposed by Likert (1932). In this system, widely used in the field of psychology and social sciences, the author proposes the development of instruments based on scales that ordinarily ask about the degree to which a person agrees or disagrees with some statement and, therefore, attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ visibility were organised following the same model.

The most favourable attitudes focus mainly on two arguments. On the one hand, there is an interest in highlighting the importance of visibility as a way of raising awareness and educating the population through public figures of national relevance, explicitly indicating that, by getting to know other people, individual acceptance and appreciation of LGBTIQ+ people can be achieved. This is consistent with research and theoretical approaches (Dávila et al., 2021; Francisco Amat et al., 2022; Ross, 2008) that account for the relevance of visibility as a strategy to decrease stigma towards LGBTIQ+ people and, in this way, contribute to their self-acceptance.

On the other hand, comments in favour of LGBTIQ+ people per se were considered to be favourable to visibility. Although these comments are not explicit, they do share some of the purposes of visibility, such as the need for respect for human rights and equal conditions for all people. These results are consistent with those obtained by Avellaneda García (2020), who conducted a research study in which she identified attitudes towards the LGBT community in Facebook comments in the Peruvian press. As in this study, the author concluded that favourable attitudes towards the LGBT community are based on a rights and human dignity approach.

The study also identified, especially in the category of undervaluing visibility, attitudes that reflect a lack of awareness and sensitivity to the importance of visibility for the health of LGBTIQ+ people. For example, there are comments that explicitly consider it unnecessary to talk about anyone's private life, and therefore news about it should not be published. Others reinforce this idea, but point to the fact that apparently cissexual people do not mediatise their personal lives, establishing an equivalence between the experiences of all people regardless of their sexual and gender identity. However, there are different reports that report on the violence experienced by LGBTIQ+ people and that in no way is the situation similar to that of cissexual people (Gómez Roa & Castañeda, 2021; Gómez Roa et al., 2022). In this sense, as already mentioned, visibility is not only a central stage in shaping the identity of LGBTIQ+ people (Pérez Sancho, 2005), but also has an important impact on their mental health and quality of life (Barrientos et al., 2017, 2019; Feinstein et al., 2021). Furthermore, it contributes to decreasing stigma and violence associated with it (Dávila et al., 2021; Jacobs & Meeusen, 2021), including bullying of young people (Francisco Amat et al., 2022).

Negative comments about visibility and towards LGBTIQ+ people are abundant and range from attitudes based on a conservative discourse about the unnecessary disclosure of private lives to the validation of hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ people. In these cases, the use of foul language, the reduction of sexual and gender identity to the biological-genital, and mockery based on gender prejudice and stereotypes are common.

Avellaneda García (2020) argues that negative attitudes towards the LGBT community are based on the need to sustain the cisheteronormative system. The author proposes that such attitudes lead to a moral devaluation of LGBT people, who, being seen as lacking in what is human and natural, deserve to be on the receiving end of hatred and humiliation. The author adds that the negative attitudes are also based on binary principles of sexuality and the categorisation of being male and female as beliefs that are emphasised on biological and religious grounds. This type of positioning was prevalent in comments expressing negative attitudes towards LGBTIQ+ people and their visibility.

Furthermore, as far as the conservative discourse is concerned, it points to the threat posed by LGBTIQ+ people and their supposed immorality. In this sense, Monroe and Plant (2019) point out that dehumanisation, through a moral principle of purity, would legitimise the free expression of prejudice and discriminatory acts.

According to da Silva and Aléssio (2019), the emotions and beliefs expressed in the comments represent LGBTIQ+ people as unnatural people, associated with the pathological and who, therefore, in their devalued human character (Herek, 2007) are not subjects of rights; consequently, they are legitimised to be the object of hostile attitudes as a strategy to maintain the moral order of society (Avellaneda García, 2020; da Silva & Aléssio, 2019; Monroe & Plant, 2019). da Silva and da Silva (2021) identified modalities in hate speech towards LGBT people in Facebook comments that are consistent with those of the present study, such as: the belief that LGBTIQ+ people are victimised for preferential treatment; the consideration that they are sick people; that they are a threat to children and adolescents; the presence of insults and insults; negative attitudes justified on moral, religious or biological grounds; and expressions of disgust and aversion. The findings are also consistent with other models that scale the intensity of hate speech towards other minority groups. For example, Bahador's model (2020, cited in Faiq & Noori, 2022) considers the implications of dehumanising and demonising the other as a strategy to avoid responsibility for hate speech.

With this in mind, it is relevant to consider the emotional effects that could be associated with the presence of comments on social media that attack through the use of hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ people through expressions of disgust, mockery or revulsion. These meaningful and enduring comments could have important consequences for LGBTIQ+ people who are exposed to this type of content, especially considering the high incidental exposure to Facebook news stories (Kligler-Vilenchik et al., 2020) and their respective reactions.

Considering the results of the study, at least two projections can be mentioned. On the one hand, the classification and grading of comments can be an important input to build instruments to measure attitudes, prejudices and hate speech towards LGBTIQ+ people and their visibility in social media which, as has been established, is a natural context of social interactions very relevant in today's life. On the other hand, the categories raised would make it possible to develop an educational strategy aimed at raising awareness of the types of aggression and the effects on mental health of the violence to which LGBTIQ+ people are exposed in social media and Internet services, following the guidelines of Meyer's minority stress model, which points out that hostile socio-cultural contexts can affect it (Miller et al., 2023). The projections of the study would allow progress in improving the quality of life and mental health of LGBTIQ+ people, as by problematising the negative attitudes and hate speech to which they are exposed, sensitivity and empathy could be appealed to, and even the regulation of SSR services. Undoubtedly, this can contribute to reducing aggression, internalised stigma and self-blame, aspects that have been related to the deterioration of the mental health of LGBTIQ+ people (González Araya et al., 2020).

In further studies, we intend to explore the effect of incidental exposure to negative comments and their relationship to internalised stigma.

In conclusion, conducting this study using a qualitative approach could have certain advantages over the classical ordinal scale approach (Likert, 1932). Currently, it is well regarded to have a progressive attitude towards these issues, so that, under the principle of social desirability (Krumpal, 2013), people would tend to express more favourable attitudes than they actually do if survey techniques are used. On the other hand, there is ample evidence of the freedom and impunity provided by anonymity on social media services for people who have a radical and explicitly violent or discriminatory stance.

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